Meeting of the Northwest Arctic & North Slope Subareas PPOR Workgroup

January 20, 2011
Alaska Department of Environmental Conservation
555 Cordova Street
Anchorage, Alaska 99503
Web-based Teleconference

Attendees:

Colleen Keen-Pacific Environment
Craig Miller-Transport Canada
Don Dragoo-AMNWR
George Olemaun- NS Borough
Fred McAdams-ACS
Denise Michels-Nome
Vince Kelley-ADEC
Dan Stevenson-NPS
John Chase-NW Arctic Borough
Zack Stevenson-NW Arctic Borough
Matt Ganley-Bering Straits Native Corp.
Joy Baker-Nome Harbormaster
Dale Gardner-ADEC
Larry Iwamoto-ADEC
Catherine Berg-USFWS
Matt Forney-NOAA
Rob Hollinger-USCG
Jeff Estes-USCG
Amy Cox-NOAA
Mark Janes-Nuka Research
Doug Mutter- DOI
Bill Tracey-Point Lay
Tim Robertson- Nuka Research

Tim Robertson of Nuka Research and Planning Group, contractors with Alaska Department of Environmental Conservation, opened the meeting by explaining the goals of the meeting and then lead the introductions.

Mark Janes of Nuka Research presented a history and overview of Potential Places of Refuge (PPOR) in Alaska. He reviewed the intent and content of the documents that will be submitted for inclusion in each subarea contingency plan. He explained that the PPORs will not be prioritized, but information gathered by the project on each area will be made available to decision-makers that will help them make better decisions. During an incident in which a vessel requests refuge all places are potential places of refuge depending on circumstances. He noted the under the best circumstances an incident command system consisting of local, state and federal stakeholders makes decisions regarding what to do, but the ultimate responsibility rests with the USCG Captain of the Port for Western Alaska. He noted the importance of the workgroup process in providing information and expertise in the development of the documents, reviewing and approving the plans. The presentation is available here-
http://www.dec.state.ak.us/spar/perp/nwappor/110120_PPOR_present.pdf

Mr. Robertson led a discussion regarding the vessel classification system that has been used in other subareas. In past PPOR projects typical vessel classification was:

- Shallow Draft-typical of fishing and excursion vessels up to 200 ft. LOA, generally don't 300 gross tons, and have drafts less than 15 ft.

- Light Draft- typical of trampers, ferries and small freighters that had a LOA of up to 450 ft. and drafts up to 25 ft.
- Deep Draft-vessels up to 1000 ft. LOA, draft 25 ft. to 60 ft. of draft and generally exceeded 60,000 gross tons. These were large freighters, tankers and cruise ships.

The group discussed the traffic in the NW Arctic and North Slope. Typical vessels that come through the Nome Harbor, operate in, and transit through the area include:

- 450 ft. tanker vessels
- 200-400 ft. fuel, cargo and construction barges,
- Barges are towed by ocean going tugs with drafts 18-20ft.
- Shallow draft vessel of 4-10 ft. draft, typical of local fishing boats
- Research and small cruise ships with 15-18 ft. drafts
- Resupply vessels with 20-25 ft. drafts
- Freighters transiting to the Red Dog Mine are deep draft
- Deep draft vessels are passing through the area because of the opening of the Arctic and the Northwest Passage.

Craig Miller of Transport Canada commented that most operation in the Canadian Arctic are centered in the east, increased traffic is heading westward. Most traffic is tug and tow, with some small tanker vessels.

Most refueling of the coastal villages occurs via ocean going barges with deep draft tugs. These anchor offshore and then fuel and cargo is shuttled to shore via smaller shallow draft tugs and barges. This is due to the shallow nature of the coast. The group discussed the nature of the coastal lagoon systems and vessels that use them. They are all shallow with water levels in the lagoons not exceeding 10 ft. and are typically 2-4 ft. Entrance to the lagoons by vessels is determined by wind direction more than tidal influence. All the lagoons are very sensitive and important for local subsistence. It was noted that Wainwright is providing increasing support for oil industry operations and that they were looking to expand their capabilities in Wainwright Inlet. This area has some capability to accommodate shallow draft vessels and they are developing infrastructure to support operations. More information is needed from the Village Corporation regarding future plans for development.

A discussion was held regarding larger vessels transiting the area becoming more common and that the contingency planning should address possible increases in this traffic. The workgroup came to the consensus that the current classification system from above would be capture the range of vessels in the NWA and NS.

The group then discussed the open water season. General conclusions were that the season is changing with earlier and later operation being possible, but ice may change yearly and is less predictable. The current season for the area:

- Nome/Norton Sound- early June to late November
- Kotzebue- Early July to mid-October
- Barrow Area- July to October/Early November
- Prudhoe Bay- boats are launched Mid-July and pulled mid October.

In each area, information on the ice conditions and operational seasons in addition to links to the ice observation stations will be further researched and included in the plans.

The group then began a process of identifying the PPOR in each subarea. Mr. Robertson noted that the Alaska Marine Pilots had offered to attend but were not able to. They will be further consulted regarding anchorages they utilize for the ships they pilot in the area. Many local residents reinforced the notion that there are no safe places in the North Slope for larger vessels to take refuge and very few in the Northwest Arctic. The places noted below are only usable if the circumstances, such as wind direction and sea-state, are correct. Vessels operating later in the season will be subject to increased risk of encountering larger storms and heavy icing conditions. It was also noted that response resources are not in the area. This will be noted in the plans.
The Workgroup developed the following draft list of Potential Places of Refuge:

Type of berth	Location Name	Lat.	Lon.	Max Vessel Depth
Draft List Northwest Arctic Places of Refuge				
Anchorage	Gambell Anchorage	63º40.57'N	171º33.62'W	D
Anchorage	Savonga Anchorage	63º38.41'N	171º34.27'W	D
Anchorage	Oomyousik Point	63º22.25'N	169º48.86'W	D
Anchorage	Powooiliak Bay	63º13.07'N	170º49.88'W	D
Anchorage	St. Micheal Bay	63º30.73'N	161º49.71'W	D
Anchorage	Golovin Bay	64º32.99'N	163º06.96'W	L/S
Dock	Nome Harbor	64º29.81'N	165º25.25'W	L
Anchorage	Sledge Island	64º31.94'N	166º11.30'W	D
Anchorage	Port Clarence	65º14.62'N	166º40.28'W	D
Anchorage	Cape York	65º29.10'N	167º43.27'W	D
Anchorage	Tin City	65º32.59'N	167º57.86'W	D
Anchorage	Little Diomede	65º47.41'N	168º54.11'W	D
Anchorage	Goodhope Bay	66º13.12'N	163º27.64'W	D
Anchorage	Shishmaref Anchorage	66º16.43'N	166º18.01'W	D
Dock	Cape Blossom-Proposed	66º43.72'N	162º31.55'W	S/L?
Anchorage	Sea Buoy Anchorage	66º48.08'N	163º14.90'W	D
Dock	Red Dog Mine Port	67º36.17'N	164º04.06'W	S
Draft List of North Slope Potential Places of Refuge				
Anchorage	Pt Hope	68º26.14'N	166º38.89'W	D
Anchorage	Point Lay Anchorage	69º46.06'N	163º21.88'W	D
Anchorage	Icy Point Anchorage	70º22.47'N	161º28.28'W	D
Anchorage	Wainwright Anchorage	70º39.26	160º 14.27'W	D
Anchorage	Wainwright Inlet	70º36.84'N	160º02.94'W	S

Anchorage	Peard Bay	70º53.99'N	158º25.10'W	D
Anchorage	Point Barrow	71º24.10'N	156º17.61'W	D
Anchorage	Dease Inlet	71º13.83'N	155º53.35'W	D
Anchorage	Harrison Bay	70º37.52'N	151º26.88'W	D
Dock	Oliktok Dock/road	70º30.21'N	149º53.50'W	S
Dock	West Dock	70º23.52'N	148º29.86'W	S
Anchorage	Midway Island Anchorage	70º35.62'N	148º13.13'W	D
Anchorage	Cross Island Anchorage	70º31.96'N	147º52.56'W	D
Dock	Badami Dock	70º09.19'N	146º53.73'W	S
Anchorage	Camden Bay	70º10.88'N	144º38.67'W	D
Anchorage	Tuktoyuktuk-Canada	69º32.19'N	133º17.47'W	L

Each site was discussed and specific port requirements, assets and possible impacts were discussed. These were noted and will be included in the plans along with additional research on operational and site-specific characteristics. Resources and impacts that may occur will be displayed in the plans. The current list is only a draft and needs review and input from workgroup members and the public.

Final comments from the group included a desire that local knowledge be included and sought out from the local villages and the borough planning offices. There is great concern of the impacts of oil, increased marine activities on the migratory mammal that are crucial to the existence of the communities of the Arctic. The group discussed other projects and initiatives that support of planning in the arctic and how the PPOR project may assist and benefit. NOAA is developing the Arctic Nautical Chart Plan and foresees that decisions made here will influence the plan. Matt Forney of NOAA requested that the plan be made available to the group. The group discussed the workgroup process and the communication needed to ensure an open exchange of information. The project website is a key component in this communication and will house the project documents

Tim Robertson outlined the remaining process to develop the PPOR documents:

- A meeting summary will be developed and circulated for review
- Maps and the Site Specifics and Operational Characteristics describing the areas will be developed.
- Additional outreach will be conducted to gain local knowledge and expertise
- The draft documents will be posted to the website for review and comments
- The edits from the review will be included in the plans and they will be re-posted.
- The new plans will be posted and a workgroup meeting will be held to discuss the plans, offer any additional changes and approve the plans
- The plans will then be submitted to the each subareas contingency plan committee for inclusion in the Subarea Contingency Plan.